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Thoreau and the Student Rebels

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On the last morning in April 1968, virtually without advance warning or preparation, I was astonished to encounter a legacy from Henry David Thoreau mixed into what the Cox Commission termed "the final academic cataclysm" at Columbia University. Having just returned from sabbatical research in the South Pacific, my homecoming emotions approximated those ascribed to Rip Van Winkle. A police "bust" during the night had left the Columbia population thoroughly stunned. I was variously advised that (1) the university had been brought to a halt, absolutely and forever, (2) the university was beginning a glorious upsurge, resulting from much-needed reorganizations, (3) the previous night had been a blood bath from which no community could recover, and (4) I was fortunate to return just after a week of outrages had been forcibly ended. It was clear that, for the moment, the usual sources of information could not explain the metamorphoses of once-familiar territory.

Looking for clues to the crisis, I encountered some evidence which, apparently, had escaped other notice. It was lying in a badly trampled bed of tulips near Fayerweather Hall. About two hundred protesting students had been removed from that particular building. They left behind a heavy fallout of placards and banners, askew in the flower beds. Two crumpled signs in this jetsam of revolution startled me by their familiar content. One read: STOP THE MACHINE; another proclaimed: BE A COUNTER-FRICTION! Together, these sentiments betrayed a common origin—Thoreau's essay, "Civil Disobedience." A turbulent police operation seemed an incongruous setting for the thoughts of the Concord saunterer, but in view of the substantial scholarship devoted to Thoreau by some of my colleagues at Columbia, I assumed that his influence was well established among the students on Morningside Heights.

This hypothesis was soon confirmed by a friendly undergraduate. He laid aside his own sign—DON'T TALK TO THE FACULTY—THEY ONLY CONFUSE THINGS!—while we chatted about the matter. I learned that

Thoreau, at least in the view of some striking students, belonged in the modern pantheon of revolutionary gurus, along with Che Guevara and Malcolm X. These students saw their university in such completely inhuman terms that they sought nothing less than its destruction!

As an isolated incident, no doubt this might have been quickly forgotten. It had a counterpart, however, among events I encountered half a world away, centered around the medical school of the University of Tokyo. There, a group of students attempted to bridge the East-West gap by helping me understand the origins of their own revolt, which eventually spread to paralyze that entire institution. One of the medical students, to my amazement, produced a Japanese translation of "Civil Disobedience" and proceeded to discuss its applicability to the educational scene in Tokyo. While I could not vouch for the translation, there was no doubt about the author's identity. A five-cent U.S. postage stamp, bearing Leonard Baskin's portrayal of Thoreau, had been glued onto the first page of the dog-eared copy, turning the book into an icon.

Months later, in Munich, a mention of this coincidence prompted several disaffected local university students to bring out personal copies of the same essay, printed in both English and German. Their already generous courtesies became positively reverential after I remarked that "Civil Disobedience" had been written very near my home and that Thoreau had some of his best ideas while boating on the river which happened to border my own backyard. It appeared that these entirely fortuitous credentials might become a worldwide passport to hospitality from the more literary student rebels.

In the source drawn upon by those American, Asian, and European students, Thoreau referred to cases in which serious injustice resulted from "friction of the machine of government." Specific remedies either did not exist or might prove worse than the evil they were designed to correct. When situations met those criteria, Thoreau prescribed, "Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine."

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Obviously, many students at that time felt that this described life within their universities or, in broader perspective, within an inhumane technological society from which those institutions could not be dissociated.

During our discussions of these viewpoints, students readily drew analogies between Thoreau's civil disobedience and their own. For example, they felt that their attitudes concerning racial and poverty problems were similar to Thoreau's outrage concerning slavery. Strikes against "insensitive" university administrations were compared to Thoreau's refusal to pay poll taxes to a State having a fugitive slave law. The night in jail, which was Thoreau's reward, was a penalty which the students were willing, even eager, to pay. Some of them argued that imprisonment was the most effective form of social protest open to Thoreau and, more recently, to Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and themselves—all admittedly influenced by Thoreau's essay. They were unanimous in the view that Thoreau, had he lived in their modern circumstances, would be "right in there" manning the barricades with the most active student rebels.

Inevitably, I had to raise the question whether any evidence from Thoreau's own student activities supported this view. It was well known to the modern rebels that Thoreau had made a few mildly critical remarks about Harvard at various times after his graduation. Their consensus, however, was that nineteenth-century academia was a vastly simpler world, presenting few major provocations to the students. "Universities must have been run with more human understanding," was one wistful interpretation. A German student, commenting upon this point, ventured a different guess, based upon his views of New England history; he postulated that a college rebellion would have been unknown or impossible under the "puritan discipline" of Thoreau's time.

Unfortunately for speculations about Harvard's academic bliss, that environment was anything but tranquil during the 1830s. For generations that followed shortly after the

American revolution, the shock of war and the elevation to university status stimulated much new thought about Harvard's entire educational system. The university was still largely a rule-bound and puritanical academic community, but there were urgent calls for reform of the old classical curriculum. Greater freedom of choice among subjects taught was being sought by undergraduates. Provision was being made for division of some classes into sections, according to the abilities of the students—another novelty. The special needs of graduate students were also being debated.

Presiding over Harvard's academic ferment from 1829 to 1845 was Josiah Quincy, a politician with little real interest in education. He instituted a bizarre marking system that awarded points for chapel, compositions, class, and so forth, but deducted points for a wide range of misbehaviors. Faculty members had to spend long hours judging students accused of cracking walnuts in chapel, wearing certain color combinations of Sunday clothes, or committing other sins. It was a situation ripe for revolt. The manner in which a student revolt actually evolved and the responses of the university authorities at various stages provide classic examples of the ingredients underlying campus rebellions, complete with the sequels that have grown familiar to newspaper readers several generations later.

In 1834, during Thoreau's first year at Harvard, all four classes submitted petitions, respectfully requesting the abolition of the point system of ranking students. The petition from the freshman class, which Thoreau signed, included the following arguments:

We believe moreover that the time has arrived when literary standing must depend on something more than mere college rank, when a nobler motive must prompt the student to action than the petty emulation of the school-boy, when he must have a higher standard of action than the mere marks of his instructor.... So long as this system of rank is the criterion by which his scholarship is to be judged it will be his endeavour not so much to become thoroughly acquainted with a subject as to study it in such a manner as will best insure his success in the recitation room.

This was clearly an idealistic petition and, although it failed to propose alternatives to the existing system, it certainly was not an attempt by the students to evade responsibilities. A sensitive faculty and administration might have regarded those sentiments as an opportunity to undertake reforms. Unfortunately, this petition, like all the others, was rejected.

Bitter confrontations between students and Harvard officials resulted. Furniture was broken, windows smashed, and a "watch set for the protection of College property" was stoned by the students. President Quincy announced that he would "turn over violators of the public peace and destroyers of the property of the University to the animadversion of the civil tribunals." Immediately, the rioting became worse than ever.

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The spoils of sacked buildings were burned. An explosion was set off in the Chapel. Students wore crepe armbands and hung the President in effigy after distributing handbills attacking his character. The entire sophomore class (with three exceptions) was dismissed for the balance of the year and ordered to leave town. A bluntly worded pamphlet, giving their version of the rebellion, was circulated by senior students and evoked forty-seven pages of rebuttal from the Overseers. Excellent students began to go elsewhere and at least one distinguished professor departed. It was, in short, a full-fledged rebellion.

What was Thoreau's role in these events? Beyond his signing of the petition quoted above, it appears that he shunned the entire upheaval.

John Weiss, one of Thoreau's classmates and a leader of the rebellion, recollected that

Thoreau "declined to accompany" the rebels at one time and "disappeared while our young absurdity held its orgies." Moreover, this must have been a general pattern in Thoreau's behavior, for although the majority of his classmates were subjected to disciplinary actions sometime during their stay at Harvard, the faculty minutes give no indication that Thoreau ever broke the rules, either on his own or as a member of a rebellious group. He was, in fact, the antithesis of a student rebel!

Many suggestions have been advanced to explain this fact. Was Thoreau, as John Weiss once proposed, deficient in "animal spirits"? Did he, perhaps, consider the rebellion more repugnant than the system it opposed? Or was some deep-seated craving to conform dominant over all the temptations of active rebellion when he had to choose? Some partial truths may exist among these various possibilities, but they all omit a larger, more positive, factor in Thoreau's behavior.

It was characteristic of Thoreau to have urgent things to do on his own. When he reached Harvard, he was already dedicated to literature, and he spent much of his free time compulsively filling his notebooks in the Harvard library, saving up extracts for future reference. There was also the nearby weasel's nest that he visited daily during the winter and, in warmer weather, the nesting birds. In view of Thoreau's adult life style, it would seem surprising if, even as a college student, he ranked the lures and satisfactions of a campus rebellion above those to be found in the library and in naturalizing. The resources of the university were being exploited for his own urgent purposes, and time was valuable. Even his fellow student, John Weiss, amended his notion of deficient "animal spirits" in another reminiscence about Thoreau: "It is plain now that he was preparing to hold his future views with great setness, and personal appreciation of their importance."

Walden, is it you?

—"The Ponds," *Walden*

The ultimate crystallization of Thoreau's views on rebellious individuality did not appear until after his death, when "Life without Principle" was published in the October 1863 *Atlantic Monthly*. In that essay he admitted a horror of burdening his attention with "news of the street" or "the details of a single case of the criminal court." (We might wonder how Thoreau would react to today's print media or, even more tantalizing, to the 24-hour outpourings from television.) Yet resistance to social pressures or distractions seems, for Thoreau, less an urge toward rebellion than a safeguard for advancing "a certain work" of his own.

Thoreau's own "certain work," even as a student, was observing, thinking, and writing—not direct action. Even in such a mild case of activism as his brief stay in the Concord jail, the scenario suggests more happenstance (including the laziness of the jailor) than a plot of heroic political maneuvering. By the

time Thoreau completed his studies at Harvard College at age twenty, he had been clearly identified as an above-average student and had earned the advanced "Part" that he presented at his commencement ceremony in 1837. His words to those who attended the ceremony included the following:

Let men, true to their nature, cultivate the moral affections, lead manly and independent lives.... The sea will not stagnate, the earth will be as green as ever, and the air as pure. This curious world which we inhabit is more wonderful than it is convenient; more beautiful than it is useful; it is more to be admired and enjoyed than used. The order of things should be somewhat reversed; the seventh should be man's day of toil, wherein to earn his living by the sweat of his brow; and the other six his Sabbath of the affections and the soul,—in which to range this widespread garden, and drink in the soft influences and sublime revelations of Nature.

Today, we might wonder about the reaction of New England officials to that "Part," so blandly dismissive of the customary emphasis upon six days of work! But it was hardly a rebel's war cry—more like a bit of pleasant whimsy, albeit with the possibility of stirring some seriously unorthodox afterthoughts.

Fresh out of college, Thoreau took the only job that was immediately available—being in charge of the Town School in Concord. Did his attitude toward authority change when he, himself, held the power and set the rules? Definitely not! The Concord Committeeman who supervised Thoreau's work was also a deacon: he strongly believed that corporal chastisement must be the cornerstone of a sound education. Thoreau, rebuked for "sparing the rod," resigned and joined his brother, John, in teaching at an earlier Concord Academy. One of Thoreau's former students, left behind, remembered him with great affection and gratitude. Asked to characterize

Thoreau as a teacher and authority figure, this student said, "He seemed the sort of man that wouldn't willingly hurt a fly."

Emma Goldman, Thoreau, and Anarchists

Chris Dodge

Emma Goldman has rarely lacked publicity. The story of the Lithuania-born anarchist orator, author, and publisher has been told by multiple biographers; her autobiography, *Living My Life*, is still in print seventy-three years after first publication; and on 12 April 2004 she was the subject of a ninety-minute documentary film, *Emma Goldman*, broadcast as part of the PBS "American Experience" series. What hasn't been widely recognized is that Goldman was inspired by Henry David Thoreau.

As an adjunct to its broadcast, PBS posted a web site with information about Goldman's life and influences ("Emma Goldman"). The site includes a timeline of events ("Timeline"), the first two of which predate Goldman's birth by nearly seven years, having to do with John Brown's 1859 raid on the arsenal at Harpers Ferry and Thoreau's subsequent "A Plea for Captain John Brown," which—the site claims—would "later influence Emma Goldman's views on violence as a justifiable means to an end" ("Henry David Thoreau"). This statement may be off target. Goldman scholar Barry Pateman, for one, believes Goldman's views on violence were formed more by the Russian revolutionary organization Narodnaya Volya, saying "she never equate[d] Thoreau with violence, as far as I can see."

There's no telling exactly when the multilingual Goldman first encountered Thoreau's writings. In 1893, when she was twenty-four, she was convicted of unlawful assembly and incitement to riot, and then spent ten months in New York City's Blackwell's Island prison. There she received, from her friend Justus Schwab, stacks of books by "Walt Whitman, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Spencer, John Stuart Mill, and many other English and American authors I learned to know and love" (*Living My Life*, 145).

Pateman says the first instance he can find of Goldman mentioning Thoreau is an interview with the *New York Sun* on 6 January 1901, where she is quoted as saying, "Americans who insisted on believing that anarchy was foreign revolution are finding out that it is universal philosophy, and that their own Emerson and Thoreau said more sensible anarchical things than any of our professed Anarchists." Pateman notes that this "early example of Goldman claiming an organic anarchist heritage for America ... that had been subverted and twisted by the development of capitalism" was an attempt to reach an American audience and free anarchism from its "immigrant associations" (Pateman; Wexler, *Emma Goldman in America*, 122).

Goldman perpetuated this idea, Pateman notes, in an interview in *The Ohio State Journal* on 8 March 1907, saying, "The doctrine of anarchy taught in this country was founded by Americans. It originated with men of the Concord School. David Thoreau, Josiah Warren and Stephen Pearl Andrews were anarchists. They were associates of William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips and Emerson. Those men were anarchists too."

After tumultuous years of public speaking and three more arrests (there would be twelve more to come), Goldman began publishing the monthly magazine *Mother Earth* in 1906, with her comrade Alexander Berkman acting as editor from 1907 to 1915. The magazine survived through 1917, at last thwarted by postal censorship, and was succeeded by seven issues of the newsletter *Mother Earth Bulletin* (October 1917 to April 1918). During this time Goldman and Berkman also published books under the Mother Earth imprint—including their own writings and those of anarchist contemporaries such as Voltairine de Cleyre, as well as pamphlets. The June 1911 issue of *Mother Earth* advertises a list of "Mother Earth Series" pamphlets, including Thoreau's "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience," available for fifteen cents.

Exactly which writings of Thoreau's did Goldman read and when? Pateman reports that a Goldman letter to *The Philadelphia Public Ledger* on 1 October 1909 quoted from "Civil Disobedience" in support of her right to speak, noting that the paper had cited this as "Evil Disobedience." Goldman quoted "Civil Disobedience" again in her essay "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For" in *Anarchism and Other Essays*:

Referring to the American government, the greatest American Anarchist, David Thoreau, said: "Government, what is it but a tradition, though a recent one, endeavoring to transmit itself unimpaired to posterity, but each instance losing its integrity; it has not the vitality and force of a single living man. Law never made man a whit more just; and by means of their respect for it, even the well disposed are daily made agents of injustice." (56–57)

Goldman neglected to insert ellipses after the clause that ends "single living man," where she left out a clause and then twenty-one sentences. Goldman quotes Thoreau again in a later passage:

"All voting," says Thoreau, "is a sort of gaming, like checkers, or backgammon, a playing with right and wrong; its obligation never exceeds that of expediency. Even voting for the right thing is doing nothing for it. A wise man will not leave the right to the mercy of chance, nor wish to prevail through the power of the majority." A close examination of the machinery of politics and its achievements will bear out the logic of Thoreau.

Here again, Goldman silently elides phrases, clauses, even entire sentences. Unfortunately, her ellipses-free rendering of Thoreau is now perpetuated on the Internet in places where she isn't even mentioned (see Shor, for example).

Another piece in *Anarchism and Other Essays*, "Minorities Versus Majorities," mentions Thoreau twice. Goldman writes, "In the literary and dramatic world, the Humphrey Wards and Clyde Fitches are the idols of the mass, while but a few know and appreciate the beauty and genius of an Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman; an Ibsen, a Hauptmann, a Butler Yeats, or a Stephen Phillips. They are like solitary stars, far beyond the horizon of the multitude" (71). Thoreau, Whitman, and—Stephen Phillips? On the topic of "the American struggle for liberty," Goldman adds Thoreau's name to a different pantheon: "The true patron saints of the black men were represented in that handful of fighters in Boston, Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Theodore Parker, whose great courage and sturdiness culminated in that somber giant John Brown. Their untiring zeal, their eloquence and perseverance undermined the stronghold of the Southern lords" (76). In "Preparedness, the Road to Universal Slaughter," Goldman again called Thoreau by the first name he was given at birth, writing, "The very proclaimers of 'America first' have ... betrayed the fundamental principles of real Americanism, of the kind ... that Jefferson had in mind when he said that the best government is that which governs least; the kind of America that David Thoreau worked for when he proclaimed that the best government is the one that doesn't govern at all...."

At least one Thoreau scholar has noted the Thoreau-Goldman connection. In an essay on the influence of "Civil Disobedience," Lawrence A. Rosenwald writes that the list of those to whom Thoreau's essay "mattered so much ... famously includes Tolstoy, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr. It also includes the anarchist Emma Goldman..." (153). Rosenwald later makes an exception of Goldman, writing that "few women activists make much of Thoreau's essay" and pointing to a feminist critique of Thoreau that appears in the same volume as his essay, Dana Nelson's "Thoreau, Manhood, and Race" (167).

Thoreau's name turns up far more commonly in studies of Goldman. According to the Emma Goldman Papers Project web site, in May–July 1916 Goldman lectured in Philadelphia, Cleveland, Denver, Los Angeles, and San Francisco on topics that included "Free or Forced Motherhood," "Anarchism and Human Nature—Do They Harmonize?" and the writings of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman (Fall, "Emma Goldman Chronology"). In 1917,

Thoreau poem under the title "True Freedom" ("Wait not till slaves pronounce the word...") was published on the cover of the January *Mother Earth*, with a footnote, "Published for the first time. By courtesy of the Boston Bibliophile

Society." Later that year, after the U.S. entered the war in Europe, Goldman and Berkman were arrested and charged with conspiring to interfere with the draft, though their antiwar stance was hardly a secret (Wexler, *Emma Goldman in America*, 233). In a speech at a meeting of the No-Conscription League on 4 June, eleven days before her arrest, Goldman said, "I honor that great American Henry D. Thoreau, who wrote of the duty of Civil disobedience, and we are following him and his doctrines. We believe the

time will come when the highest conscience of humanity will be shown in civil disobedience to unrighteous requirements of the powerful few" ("Meeting of No-Conscription League").

Brought to trial, Goldman addressed the jury, asserting, "Never would I change my ideas because I am found guilty," then related a canard that still makes the rounds (whose source is still a mystery to me): "I may remind you of two great Americans, undoubtedly not unknown to you, gentleman of the jury; Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. When Thoreau was placed in prison for refusing to pay taxes, he was visited by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Emerson said, 'David, what are you doing in jail?' and Thoreau replied, 'Ralph, what are you doing outside, when honest people are in jail for their ideals?'" (*Red Emma Speaks*, 372–373). Biographer Alice Wexler notes that in late 1919, as Goldman and Berkman awaited deportation on Ellis Island, the two wrote a pamphlet titled *Deportation: Its Meaning and Menace*, in which they "appended a list of quotations from famous Americans, including Thoreau, Emerson, Lincoln, and Jefferson, which would be liable under the current criminal syndicalism laws" (*Emma Goldman in Exile*, 16).

Despite her deportation, Goldman wrote later that she did not "despair of American life" and that having experienced police raids on her lectures (about such topics as birth control), with "innumerable arrests and three convictions," she hadn't felt alone in facing repression. Citing "heroic figures ... who in the face of persecution and obloquy have lived and fought for the right of mankind to free and unstinted expression" Goldman then specifically



On 10 September 1901 Goldman was arrested by Chicago police, who attempted to implicate her in the assassination of President William McKinley (Library of Congress photograph number B2-127-11; courtesy of The Emma Goldman Papers Project and the Berkeley Digital Library SunSITE, <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Goldman/>)

named some “native-born children who have assuredly not lagged behind”: Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, Voltairine de Cleyre, Moses Harmon, and Horace Traubel (*Red Emma Speaks*, 437).

The twentieth-century American anarchist movement spurred by Goldman and Berkman included countless lesser known figures also inspired by Thoreau. Paul Avrich's *Anarchist Voices* is drawn from interviews conducted with over two hundred anarchists between 1963 and 1991. Many mention Thoreau. Anatole Freeman Ishill, the son of anarchist printer Joseph Ishill (1888-1966), reports, “Father was a strict vegetarian and a Thoreauvian. He belonged to the Thoreau Society and we all visited Walden Pond in 1962, which for him was a kind of mystical experience” (248). American Civil Liberties Union founder Roger Baldwin says, “The individualist anarchists, like Benjamin Tucker, never inspired me, despite the fact that they claimed Thoreau and Emerson, whom I claimed too” (63), while Juan Anido confides otherwise, saying “I was mostly drawn to the individualists, to Emerson and especially Thoreau” (396). Avrich notes that machinist Valerio Isca, “active in both the Italian and English-speaking anarchist movement in New York” from the 1920s on, was “a great admirer of Henry David Thoreau whose portrait hung on the wall of his Mohegan cottage, with an open copy of *Walden* on the desk beneath” (144). He also cites Thoreau's influence on Louis Genin (440) and quotes Manuel Komroff's assertion, “I feel closer to Jefferson and Thoreau than ever” (203).

Perhaps Avrich's most interesting interviews mentioning Thoreau are those with Jo Ann Burbank and people who knew her. Burbank (also known as Jo Ann Wheeler) edited a journal called *Mother Earth*, a publication calling itself “A Libertarian Farm Paper Devoted to the Life of Thoreauvian Anarchy” (bringing Goldman and Thoreau together, in a sense). In one interview Burbank says, “We had been brought up in my family on Emerson and Thoreau and Bronson Alcott—the Fullers were cousins of some sort. I was much impressed by Thoreau's essay on Civil Disobedience, but *Walden* was our bible, and, given the Depression, we tried living on the land. It wasn't easy, but we did it. We tried to follow the authority from within, rather than any external authority. We hadn't much money but we had a great deal of spirit and high thinking” (266). Burbank refers in passing to her son, Jon Thoreau, fathered by John Scott. Of Scott she says, “His first son, with another woman, was named Marx Scott. A son named Marx[;] then, seventeen years later, a son named Thoreau—that's an interesting evolution!” (266).

Goldman contemporary Voltairine de Cleyre read Thoreau; and Avrich, her biographer, asserts that Goldman was “using the language of Thoreau” when she wrote that anarchism “pleads with men to renounce the worthless luxuries which enslave them,” and when she urged that people replace “the rush and jangle of the chase for wealth” with “the silence, the solitude, the simplicity of the free life”

(*American Anarchist*, 164). Carlotta R. Anderson's biography of another contemporary of Goldman's, Joseph Labadie (1850-1933), also cites Thoreau several times.

It is likely that some of Goldman's forebears in the anarchist movement also read and were influenced by Thoreau. Avrich says that Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman were writers that Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) held in esteem, for instance (*Anarchist Portraits*, 80). However Thoreau is not listed in the index to Kropotkin's *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* nor in the index of his *In Russian and French Prisons*. George Woodcock's biography of Kropotkin does mention Thoreau, but only in a passing reference to “the native [American] individualist anarchism of Benjamin Tucker, derived from Thoreau, Josiah Warren, and Proudhon” (268). Avrich further notes that Max Maisel, an early 20th-century bookseller on New York's Lower East Side, had “a huge stock of radical works in Yiddish, some of them—by Kropotkin, Thoreau, and Oscar Wilde—published by Maisel himself” (192), and cites an article about Maisel published in *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* on 1 November 1959 (293). Among the early twentieth century editions of “Civil Disobedience” listed in the WorldCat database is *Di Flikht Fun Ungehorkhzamkeyt Tsum Shtatt*, published at New York in 1970 by “M. Mayzel.”

Did Emma Goldman read Thoreau in Yiddish? It's not outside the realm of possibility. Maisel advertised his books in *Mother Earth* and, according to Goldman scholar Candace Falk, “Goldman lectured regularly in Yiddish to Jewish audiences, although she much preferred and was more proficient in German, her mother tongue” (*Volume One*, 367). Turn over rocks and interesting facts sometimes scurry out. So, too, however, do questions keep coming.

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Thoreau's *Letters to a Spiritual Seeker*: A Review

Dave Bonney

Henry D. Thoreau. *Letters to a Spiritual Seeker*. Edited by Bradley P. Dean. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004. ISBN: 0-393-05941-3; 266 pp.; US\$21.95 cloth.

It was a disillusioned and spiritually hungry Harrison Gray Otis Blake who took up his pen in March 1848 and wrote a letter to Henry Thoreau. The men were mere acquaintances. They had known each other by sight from their Harvard years in the mid-1830s, but it wasn't until late in 1844 or early 1845 that they were formally introduced to one another by Emerson, with whom Blake, an early disciple, was visiting. They had a single lengthy conversation, which was memorable to Blake. The seeds planted during that encounter took root and grew in him during the intervening three-and-a-half or four years. Seeking a deeper and more spiritually satisfying experience of life, but finding himself grounded in the shallows of society's conventions, Blake boldly, if not somewhat impertinently, demanded in his only surviving letter to Thoreau: "Speak to me in this hour as you are prompted.... Could I plant myself at once upon the truth, reducing my wants to their minimum ... life would be infinitely richer. But alas! I shiver on the brink." Thus began this rich correspondence that continued

over the next thirteen years. A spiritual seeker had found his spiritual mentor.

Bradley P. Dean, whose credits include the reconstruction and publication of Thoreau's "lost works," *The Dispersion of Seeds* (in *Faith in a Seed* [1993]) and *Wild Fruits* (2000), has performed another valuable service by culling the Blake letters from the larger body of Thoreau's collected correspondence. In their earlier contexts, the special nature of these letters is easily overlooked, appearing perhaps as so many disconnected threads. When gathered together by themselves, without intervening distractions, they become whole cloth, of a weave revealing the spiritual and religious dimension that lay at Thoreau's core, a dimension which permeates and pervades his writings. This compartment of Thoreau's mind, and his devotion to it, is critical to understanding the man and his work.

As Dean writes in his introduction: "Thoreau's writings are most profitably understood as reports from along the route of his pilgrimage." Thanks largely to the narrowness of the path to which Blake directed Thoreau's footsteps (Blake's questions may be accurately reconstructed from Thoreau's responses), this volume provides us with a succinct yet reasonably comprehensive view of Thoreau's development as a seeker of life's deeper meanings. Consider but a few examples of his visionary character:

- "My actual life is a fact in view of which I have no occasion to congratulate myself, but for my faith and aspiration I have respect."
- "The laws of earth are for the feet, or inferior man; the laws of heaven are for the head, or superior man...."
- "Our thoughts are the epochs of our lives, all else is but a journal of the winds that blew while we were here."
- "As for conforming outwardly, and living your own life inwardly,—I do not think much of that."
- "It is not enough to be industrious; so are the ants. What are you industrious about?"

These letters display a warmth that we're not used to seeing in Thoreau, even when he is writing under the cloak of privacy that his journal permitted. As the correspondence progresses, he forthrightly acknowledges how much these letters, and Blake, meant to him as the years passed and their relationship deepened.

"I am much indebted to you," he told Blake in 1853, "because you look so steadily at the better side, or rather the true center of me ... and as I have elsewhere said 'Give me an opportunity to live.' " But all is not serious; Thoreau's humor repeatedly shines through, as when he writes: "The doctors are all agreed that I am suffering from want of society. Was never a case like it. First, I did not know that I was suffering at all. Secondly, as an Irishman might say, I

Henry David Thoreau



had thought it was indigestion of the society I got."

Dean's editing of this volume is masterful. In his graceful and insightful introduction, he has thoroughly prepared the ground over which the reader must travel in arriving at an understanding of Thoreau as a spiritual teacher. It is a role in which he is not usually considered. Dean has also taken great care to coax Blake forth from the shadows, a necessary task because otherwise we have but one letter from which to form an opinion of him. Dean judiciously blends biographical facts, Blake's reminiscences of Thoreau and their correspondence, and some side-splitting anecdotes delineating Blake's character to provide a wonderful introduction to the spiritual seeker of the title. This editorial service immeasurably increases our appreciation of the letters themselves.

In 1859 Blake informed a friend that he was thinking of editing the letters "for publication with notes and comments." He never did. In publishing this volume, Dean has completed Blake's "broken task." For forty-seven of the fifty letters, informative headnotes chronicle the events that were occurring in the lives of the correspondents and in the country at large. Copious annotations materially assist the reader by explaining allusions to historical events and persons, defining terms unfamiliar to the modern ear, tracing to original sources certain of Thoreau's ideas, and connecting passages in the letters to parallels in other of Thoreau's writings. Fore and aft, Dean has gone to great lengths to provide the reader with the tools needed to extract the marrow from these letters. In this he has admirably succeeded, and the reader will be grateful for the foundation thus provided. The scholarship is impressive; perhaps more important, it is accessible to specialist and generalist alike.

The thoughtful reader who comes to these pages will not fail to be provoked and inspired—and yes, changed—by the encounter. By any definition this is a Wisdom Book.

Thoreau Farm Trust to Restore Thoreau Birth House

Joseph C. Wheeler

On Thoreau's 187th birthday the Town of Concord and the Thoreau Farm Trust (the Trust) celebrated a purchase-and-sale agreement in a brief ceremony in front of Thoreau's birth house on Virginia Road in Concord. Under the agreement the Town will sell the house and a two-acre lot to the Trust for one dollar. Title will pass only after the Trust raises \$800,000 for the restoration. The Trust has two years to raise the funds.

Coming right after the Thoreau Society's 2004 Annual Gathering, the celebration was attended by a number of Society members still in town, including several from other countries. Mark Thoreau from England, who has ancestors in common with Henry, greeted the celebrants.

The birth house was listed in the National Register of Historic Places this year as the Wheeler-Minot Farmhouse. John Wheeler is said to have built the original house about 1730. Jonas Minot owned the house when as a widower he married the widow Mary Dunbar in 1798. Mary brought her children Charles and Cynthia to the farm. Cynthia married John Thoreau in 1812. After Jonas died in 1813 Mary asked John Thoreau to manage her "widow's thirds." This explains why John and Cynthia Thoreau were living

in the east side of the house in 1817 when their son David Henry was born there. However, John did not make a go of farming and left when Henry was less than a year old.

The Town of Concord had bought the house in 1997. The Trust was created in 1998. Earlier negotiations involved the Education Collaborative for Greater Boston (EDCO), which was administering funds left by Thoreau Society member Nathaniel



Seefurth, who wanted to establish a center in Concord for education about Thoreau. In his first attempt years earlier, Seefurth failed to get permission from the town. EDCO's part of the birth-house negotiation similarly failed over issues related to the use of the proposed education center. Sparked by an article in *This Old House* magazine, the town called for new proposals, ending in the agreement celebrated on 12 July.

The Trust has given first priority to restoration of the house, which will be restored on the outside to its appearance in 1878, when the house was moved several hundred yards from its original location. Inside, perhaps the best-preserved room is the east bedroom, in which Thoreau was born. This will be restored to its 1817 birth-year appearance. The second phase will be the building of a barn-like education center. In addition to a focus on Thoreau, the Trust will concentrate on the history of farming in Concord.

Articles and further information about the birth house are available at www.thoreaufarm.org

Princeton's *Walden* Anniversary Paperback Series: A Review

Randall Conrad

In time for *Walden's* 150th anniversary, Princeton University Press offers five major volumes designed as a uniform set, with new introductions by contemporary writers. This is Princeton's second foray into marketing its authoritative Thoreau texts in softcover editions for a more general readership. (*The Maine Woods*, 1983, with an afterword by Joseph J. Moldenhauer, and *Walden*, 1988, introduced by Joyce Carol Oates, are still in print.)

The texts, needless to say, are unchanged from the definitive editions established for *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, still

known as the "Princeton Edition," by Shanley (*Walden*); Hovde, Howarth, and Witherell (*A Week*); Moldenhauer (*Cape Cod* and *The Maine Woods*); and Glick (*Reform Papers*, now happily retitled *The Higher Law*). What is new are the five introductions supplied by authors you probably *have* read, and who essay a variety of strategies to get you to turn to page one. We have met a couple of them before in this role; the job is challenging, the labor pool limited. In the musical chairs of Thoreau-introducing, Paul Theroux has managed to grab a different seat (*Cape Cod* for Penguin in 1987 and now *The Maine Woods*), while John McPhee (*A Week*) just stayed in his chair during the piano-playing, offering last year's *New Yorker* piece as this year's foreword. Joyce Carol Oates was bumped from *Walden* by that other American prolific, John Updike. *Cape Cod* is introduced by Robert Pinsky, while Howard Zinn presents *The Higher Law*.

Why do the novelists get to do *Walden*? Oates gave a reason in her engaging introduction of 1988: "we should understand Thoreau's 'I' to be a calculated literary invention, a fictitious character set in a naturalistic but fictitious world." Oates was fine with that, and she wrote her piece in the first person, as one writer appreciating another. (It helped that she often taught Thoreau in her lit courses.) As an adult Oates could still relish Thoreau's adolescent rebellion, as well as his wordplay and intricate art. She could decry what she regarded as Thoreau's misogyny and blind spots, and still be buoyed by the living, breathing classic.

Updike is safe in savoring the "thinginess of Thoreau's prose." Apart from that, he beats a different drum. He recommends *Walden* as a "head-clearing spice" and "an antidote to apathy and anxiety," but apparently knows that "we" are too caught up in life's demands to face, or even discern, Thoreau's challenge to the mass of men. As a result, Updike stays on the surface. His new introduction unfolds in a third-person voice propped up occasionally with an annoying "we," as if he were still at his *New Yorker* desk:

We slightly wince, on behalf of those more tightly bound to laborious necessity, when we read that "to maintain one's self on this earth is not hardship but a pastime, if we will live simply and wisely...." Thoreau makes light of most men's need to work, and ignores the wave of industrial toil that is breaking upon New England [in the 1840s].

In a sesquicentennial introduction, *we* might have expected sympathy for the raw life-experiment of *Walden*, but Updike mostly squirms over his pensum. Ignoring that Oates stuff about a fictitious character in a fictitious world, Updike seeks a real Thoreau, a *responsible* Thoreau, and is disappointed. Thoreau, you learn, was not who he pretends to be: he was "something of a gentleman" in a Concord that "was by our lights a bucolic world."

We prefer an introducer who does not obstruct the view but opens a wide window. In a bolt of inspiration, Princeton asked Howard Zinn to do the honors for *The Higher Law: Thoreau on Civil Disobedience and Reform*. Zinn doesn't doubt for a second that the man who went to jail in July of '46 is alive in our time, and he gets right down to it, tracing the mushrooming expansion of civil disobedience from the Mexican War, Fugitive Slave Law, and Harpers Ferry to latter-day protests against racist belligerence and government obfuscation during the civil rights struggles, the Vietnam and Gulf Wars, and the "war on terrorism." Much as Thoreau individually lambasted the governor, Judge Loring, Mister Suttle, and other minions of the slave powers in "Slavery in

Massachusetts," Zinn limns withering vignettes of Judge Larsen and Justice Fortas in 1968, and General Powell in 1991, and wants you to ask and answer, "What would Thoreau say if he were alive today?"

Robert Pinsky, poet, poet laureate (1997-2000), and educator, offers the keenest *literary* appreciation of Thoreau. You will want to read or re-read *Cape Cod*, not because Pinsky declares that it "can amaze modern readers," but because he actually proves it in his introduction. A work of literature is a particular structure built of particular words, and Pinsky knows the thrill of discovery that comes from the concrete, sustained exercise of textual explication. Rooting *Cape Cod* in the rhetoric of lecture and therefore the mode of performance, Pinsky illustrates the work's "mercurial texture" in a brilliant cascade of stylistic analyses. He shepherds you through the master's favorite lecture-hall devices—the wisecrack, the mock sermon, and the "rhetorical flight"—until you can really believe that Thoreau's listeners at the Concord Lyceum "laughed till they cried," as Emerson recorded in 1850.

Of all Thoreau books, *A Week* is the toughest to sell. John McPhee, at his best a spellbinding nature writer, wisely eschews structure, philosophy, irreligion, and the "700 books" anecdote in favor of an outdoorsy, first-person re-creation of the Thoreau brothers' two-week excursion on the Concord and Merrimack which originally appeared in the 15 December 2003 *New Yorker*.

Introducing *The Maine Woods*, Paul Theroux suggests that Thoreau felt competitive in comparison to the brilliant, wide-ranging explorers of his day—Darwin aboard the *Beagle*, Burton in Arab lands, or let's just say Emerson in England or Melville in the Marquesas. I feared the man of Concord would come up short, but Theroux takes Thoreau's full measure as an artist, environmentalist, and prophet of change in a wry and thoughtful appreciation. Theroux examines the three Maine excursions like the growth-rings of a tree, demonstrating Thoreau's maturation from a master of the "dazzling set-piece" to a "clear-sighted diarist" who denounces deforestation and seeks to understand Native Americans more realistically. And he beautifully celebrates the young spirit suffusing *The Maine Woods*: "the woods gave Thoreau the freedom to play and be youthful, for the pine tree and the moose and the Indian loomed over him, as they would a small boy."

"Farewell Address" to the Membership, 10 July 2004

Ronald A. Bosco

As a student of New England life and letters for my entire career, I've always puzzled over the practice inaugurated during the earliest days of settlement and current to this very day of a town's ministers and elected officials delivering a form of "farewell address" at the time they step down from their respective offices. I puzzled until now, because I now understand that the traditional farewell address is a person's one opportunity to remind himself perhaps more than the individuals he has served of what he set out to do while in office and what he, through the trust and friendship given him by others and through the devotion to a common mission that he has shared with others, accomplished over a period of time.

Over the past decade and more—first with Joel Myerson, then with Beth Witherell, and finally with me—the presidency of the Thoreau Society has evolved into an office that requires an occupant to be part-corporate executive, part-entrepreneur, part-cheerleader, and, it has lately occurred to me, part-magician. As in any large and active non-profit organization today, anything less than a president's success in each of these roles stands to compromise the reputation and the future prospects of the Society.

I am very proud of and pleased with the accomplishments that I, members of the Society's Board of Directors, and the Society's membership-at-large have managed to bring to pass in the four years that I have served as president. The Society's reputation and administration have never been in a stronger position in all its sixty-three years.

When I stood for office four years ago, I made three promises to members of the Society.

First, I pledged that I would inaugurate democratic reform within the Society to insure that our doors would be open to any who would wish to join or, more importantly, to re-join us. From the outset of my first term, one of the most warming aspects of my interactions with individuals was my occasional call or visit from persons who, after having left what they called the "new" Society and spent some period of time in nostalgic search for the "old," wanted me to know that they were coming "back," having decided that the single most important term in expressions such as "the Old" and "the New" Thoreau Society, was not old, nor new, but *Thoreau*.

Second, I pledged that I would inaugurate programs and a process that would insure the independence and financial self-sufficiency of the Society into the future and, thus, guarantee the Society's ability to discharge its mission while respecting the ideals of its founders and, *through the creation of a permanent endowment*, committing itself to the preservation and promotion of Thoreau's legacy for new generations. Through the extraordinary generosity of five of our members, this pledge, which four years ago I frankly doubted anyone could make good on, has been wonderfully fulfilled. You will notice that in our independent auditors' report for our most recent fiscal year that ended on 30 March 2004, the Society possessed \$577,127.00 in total net assets; included in that number of \$577,127.00 is \$443,779.00—I repeat—\$443,779.00—in *Board restricted funds* (that is, this amount, plus an additional \$10,500 that has come in for life memberships since I became president, cannot be touched without a vote of the entire Board of Directors) that, since July 2000, when I happened to become president, have been received by the Society in gifts and bequests from Margaret Bodfish, Harriet Sweetland, James J. Smith, Maurice Kameen-Kaye, and Harold Kittleson. I consider these gifts and bequests, which are now named for each

donor, to be among the most significant events of my presidency, if only because they show the vitality of the Society as represented

in the commitment of five individuals and their families to the preservation of the Society's mission and its promotion into the future. So that there is no misunderstanding, as far as I am concerned, this \$443,779.00 "endowment" should not now or in the future be touched. Its principal must continue to be invested thoughtfully and with minimum risk so that interest and dividends accrued on the principal can support activities such as the Thoreau Society Fellowships program.

Four years ago, I made another promise to the membership, should I be elected president: I pledged that I would do everything in my power to restore the Society's presence in the town of Concord proper,

Well, in November of last year, Henry and the Society that bears his name left that "other" town and came home to Concord. Our new home and address at 55 Old Bedford Road, one of the prime sites of the political revolution of 1770s that created the conditions for the intellectual revolution of the 1800s, is, as I remind our staff, all the cause we need to declare one of Henry's "perpetual holidays."

Working with some of the finest individuals anyone could wish to have at his side, I have seen each of these pledges fulfilled. Certainly, our ability to have fulfilled any one of them would have been success enough, but to have fulfilled all three! Well, that's an achievement of which we *all* should be very proud. And more remarkable yet, we did not stop there; together, we—the Board, but also so many Society members of good will—have enjoyed several more remarkable successes, including these:

- In 2001, we entered into an agreement with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to serve as the "Friends of Walden Pond"; this service has enabled us to preserve our presence at the Pond through both our bookstore and our programs at the Tsongas Gallery and to introduce our mission to the largest and most diverse audience we have ever enjoyed.
- Recently, we entered into an agreement with the National Park Service that has enabled us to position the intellectual and visionary legacy of one of America's most radical thinkers at the exact site where America's political Revolution began and to extend our educational mission through programs undertaken in cooperation with offices of the Minuteman National Historical Park.
- We have reinstituted the position of Executive Secretary, and owing to the incredible generosity and commitment of Penn State University at Altoona, the academic home of our Executive Secretary, Sandy Petrulionis, our membership office has been relocated there, and we have inaugurated not only our own website, hosted by Penn



Stefano Paolucci (left) and Antonio Casado da Rocha, Society members from Italy and Spain, respectively, visit Society headquarters the day before Annual Gathering, 7 July 2004

State University at Altoona, but also our new electronic membership list.

- Through the generosity and labor of the dedicated staff of the Princeton Edition of *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau* at Northern Illinois University, the Thoreau listserve, which almost vanished in 2003, has been taken over at NIU and will thus continue to serve the sizeable audience that remains eager to learn more about Thoreau and his legacy.
- We have seen the quality, range, and reputation of our publications take giant steps forward. In 2004-2005, several new volumes of our acclaimed *Spirit of Thoreau* series will be published under the very fine imprint of the University of Massachusetts Press; special issues of our annual *Concord Saunterer* have or are about to celebrate milestones in the history of Thoreau's relationship with Emerson and in the astonishing impact Thoreau's *Walden* has exerted for 150 years; and having doubled in size in 2002, the *Thoreau Society Bulletin* in 2003 received the Utne Independent Press Award for outstanding quality.
- After struggling for years with the best form the Society's administration should take, we now have an administrative structure in place headed by the President and working members of the Board of Directors, whose activities are supported and decisions implemented by Concord's most prized Executive Director, Jayne Gordon. Administratively, the Society's future—including its business plan and its collaborations with landmark institutions such as the Walden Pond State Reservation, the Concord Free Public Library, the Concord Museum, and, most recently, the Minuteman National Historical Park—is in extraordinarily fine hands.
- Owing to the generosity of members who have provided us with the basis for an endowment, in 2001 the Society inaugurated a Thoreau Society Fellowships program; this program, the first and still only program of its kind to support Thoreau-specific research, environmental study, and writing in the Thoreau Society Collections housed in the Henley Library at Walden Woods, has already supported the work of eight Society members, and in 2005 will support the work of three more.

Obviously, as a believer who's about to become a past-president but still will remain a believer, I could go on and on singing the praises of the Thoreau Society and the wonderful work it is now doing. And, as much as anyone in the Society, I have been moved by the incredible enthusiasm with which members have welcomed us back to Concord and the renewed trust with which so many members of long-standing have returned to the Society and are supporting its initiatives and educational as well as research programs. So, obviously we've been doing something right and we've been doing some good.

"Doing some good." You will all recall that wonderful moment in *Walden* when Henry remarks that if he should look out and see someone coming toward him to do him some good, he would turn and run for his life. I have to admit, I feel the same way, especially every time someone comes near that \$443,779.00 and wants a piece of the principal "to do some good." But I'd like to think that Henry would not run, had he lived to meet three people I would now like to ask to stand and come join me here in front of this assembly: Robert Galvin, Wesley Mott, and Joel Myerson. Bob, Wes, and Joel have each stepped down from the

Society's Board this year, Bob as Vice president for Finance (one of the great protectors of the endowment), Wes as Vice president for Publications, and Joel as a past-president of the Society and, most recently, as its elected Secretary, and, hence, scribe. Collectively, Bob, Wes, and Joel have given more than forty years in dedicated service to the Society.

As you know, the Society has a number of awards that from time to time it presents to those who have served the reputation of the Society and preserved and promoted the legacy of Henry D. Thoreau in exemplary and sustained ways. One is the Society's Walter Harding Distinguished Service Award, and I think all of us gathered here today not only remember Walter with fondness but also would have to admit that it requires a rather exceptional person to deserve the award named for Walter. That exceptional person is here, and for about twenty-five years I have been privileged to know him as a friend, a fellow of remarkable cheer whose voice I have never heard raised in anger, and a true champion of the Thoreau Society and everything the Society stands for. It is my distinct honor to present the Walter Harding Distinguished Service Award to Wesley T. Mott.

Another award the Society presents on only the rarest occasions recognizes a member's extraordinary devotion to Thoreau and his intellectual and social legacy, and to the Society that bears his name over a sustained period of time. It is my distinct honor to present the Thoreau Society Medal to two of the most devoted Thoreauvians I know: Robert Galvin and Joel Myerson.

If you will bear with me for one moment more, I should like to express my personal gratitude to two individuals for whom I have not words enough to thank them for their support of my work on behalf of the Society: Jayne Gordon, who even before she became our Executive Director was the person to whom I always turned for advice on how to unravel the mysteries of the non-profit world, and most of all, Bernadette Bosco, my wife, who cheerfully welcomed Henry into our home both day and night for the past four years.

Now, I have the honor to introduce to you a devoted Thoreauvian, scholar, teacher, and gentleman in every finest sense of those words, Robert N. Hudspeth. As I pass the Society's legendary gavel to him, Robert N. Hudspeth becomes the newest President of the Thoreau Society.

**Please submit items for the Fall
Bulletin to your editor before**

1 October 2004

Notes & Queries

☞ We are grateful to the authors who contributed articles for this number of the Bulletin. **Joseph C. Wheeler**, who retired after a thirty-one year foreign service career with the Agency for International Development and the Peace Corps, is engaged in a variety of civic activities, including serving on the Board of Directors of both the Thoreau Society and the Thoreau Farm Trust. **Edward S. Hodgson**, Professor Emeritus of Biology at Columbia

and Tufts Universities, lived in Concord for twenty years before retiring to California, but remains an admirer of all things Thoreauvian. He is the author of *Sensory Biology of Sharks* and *Neurobiology and Behavior*, numerous scientific articles, and articles for general readers in *Natural History*, *Oceans*, *Curator*, and several anthologies. **Chris Dodge** is librarian at *Ume* magazine in Minneapolis, publisher of *Dorchester Dog Hip Press*, and editor of the *Street Librarian* web site, www.geocities.com/SoHo/Cafe/7423/. **Randall Conrad**, an independent scholar in Lexington, Massachusetts, runs the Thoreau Project website at www.calliope.org/thoreau/ and has contributed to the *Concord Saunterer* and other journals. **Dave Bonney**, a resident of Levittown, New York, has been a devoted reader of Thoreau's writings for more years than he cares to remember and for many of the same reasons that compelled H. G. O. Blake to write letters.

☞ At the 2004 Annual Gathering, a number of Thoreauvians from Europe agreed on the need for a mailing list to discuss Thoreau, and to coordinate events and research among European Thoreauvians. Antonio Casado da Rocha has created such a list: to post a message, write to thoreau@elistas.com; to subscribe, send any message to thoreau-subscribe@elistas.com or visit www.elistas.com/list/thoreau/subscribe.

☞ Another auspicious development at the recent Annual Gathering occurred at the instigation of Laryssa Duncan, who put out a call for young Thoreauvians to meet and discuss issues of particular interest to them. Duncan has promised us a brief report of that meeting for the next Bulletin.

☞ At one of the Annual Gathering sessions, the presenter conducted an informal poll: for whom will you vote in November? Kerry? A sea of smiles and confidently upraised hands. Bush? As narrowed eyes carefully scrutinized the audience, we from our vantage point at the very back of the room silently cast a vote of sympathy to one trembling hand raised safely out of sight to all else in the room, a lone dissenter.

☞ The Millberg Gallery at Princeton University's Firestone Library has an exhibit entitled *Of Maps and Men: In Pursuit of the Northwest Passage* that includes a first-edition *Walden*, highlighting the passage in the "Conclusion" about the expedition. The exhibit runs until 26 September, and a booklet about the exhibit (US\$10) can be ordered by calling (609) 258-3197. An excellent Website associated with the exhibit can be visited at libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/northwest-passage/titlepage.htm.

☞ J. Parker Huber donated the 4x6-foot carpet that graces the living room in the Society's headquarters. The carpet was handmade by female artisans in the mountains of Iran.

☞ The "Frank and Ernest" comic strip for 18 June 2004 features one character sitting in front of a computer and telling the other, "I downloaded Thoreau's 'Civil Disobedience' into its memory, and now the 'command' key isn't working." To view the comic, visit www.frankandernest.com and search for that date.

☞ Playwright Jerome Lawrence, who with Robert E. Lee wrote *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* (premiered 1970), died in Malibu, California, on 29 February 2004.

☞ Laurie Shepherd's *A Dreamer's Log Cabin: A Woman's Walden* (December, 1981) is a journal of the author's year spent building a cabin near the headwaters of the Mississippi River. After quitting her jobs as insurance agent and dishwasher, the hardy 28-year-old Shepherd set to work, with the occasional help of women friends, on eight acres of land she'd saved up to

purchase, using a hand-made boom to maneuver heavy logs into place. Early on she writes, "My response [to skeptical acquaintances] is to delve ... into Thoreau to find reassurance.... I underline sentences I'd like to point out to people who misunderstand my motivation." When she finally moved into her cabin, winter was coming fast. For warmth she had her great-grandparents' wood stove, but that didn't even keep the temperature above freezing. "Thoreau's cabin was warm at night, wasn't it?" she asks. (Until she got a more efficient stove, she was rising every two hours throughout the night to stoke the fire.)

☞ In the "Notes & Queries" section of Bulletin 245, p. 13, we ran the listing for Concord from a 1843 gazetteer, which cited "445 W." We have consulted the source more closely and found that "445 W" means Concord is 445 miles from Washington, D.C. MapQuest (www.mapquest.com) gives the precise distance as 438.74 miles.

☞ From Steven F. Lawson's *Civil Rights Crossroads: Nation, Community, and the Black Freedom Struggle* (U Kentucky P, 2003), p.7: "Standard accounts of [Martin Luther] King [Jr.]'s

Coming in November

Walking Encyclopedia

The Thoreau Society Online Auction Fundraiser



Check www.thoreausociety.org for details on how you can donate, sponsor, and bid on goods and services related to *Thoreau* and *walking*, past and present—any place, any season. Excursions, equipment, cabins, clothing, supplies, guide books, bookish guides, Thoreau books, speakers, walking tours, programs, and more.

intellectual roots have long followed the minister's own discussion of his development in *Stride toward Freedom*, which charted the influence of Henry David Thoreau, Georg Freidrich Hegel, Karl Marx, Walter Rauschenbusch, Reinhold Niebuhr, Mohandas Gandhi, and Edgar Brightman."

☞ Nancy Ryley's *The Forsaken Garden: Four Conversations on the Deep Meaning of Environmental Illness* (Quest Books, 1998) includes an interview with "cultural historian and theologian" Thomas Berry, in which Berry says "[W]ildness is a component in all creativity. As Thoreau said, 'In wildness is the preservation of the world'—not wilderness, but wildness."

☞ Jon Zurn's "The Dude Abides" (*The Rake*, January 2004) profiles Robert Bly, and quotes these words from the well-known poet and translator: "Thoreau is my teacher. The only thing we can do is learn to write poems, learn to write music, learn to paint so that the madness of art can come up and meet the madness of the television insanity. Because the world is mad, the only way through the world is to learn the arts and know the madness."

☞ In *John Muir: Nature's Visionary* (National Geographic, 2000), as part of coverage of Muir's concern for the health of forests, Gretel Ehrlich writes, "[Muir] had read Thoreau's *Maine*

Woods and had embraced the ideas of the sacred grove—remnant forests held back from the ax and saw. He had carried his volume of Thoreau to Alaska, but as yet, Muir had not grasped fully just what it would take to staunch the flow of trees from the mountainsides.” Pages 91–96 relate details about 68-year-old Emerson’s 1871 visit to Muir in Yosemite. Full of quotes, the account ends: “Emerson was as taken by the parting as Muir was. His other disciple, Thoreau, had died nine years earlier.”

☞ Walter Truett Anderson’s *All Connected Now: Life in the First Global Civilization* (Westview Press, 2001) mentions Thoreau in the context of anarchism. After defining the term (p. 216), Anderson mentions three early theorists (Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin), names a contemporary anarchist of some renown (John Zerzan), and then states, “Although there is a long tradition of idealistic, pacifist opposition to authority—the heritage of Henry David Thoreau and Mahatma Gandhi—anarchism is generally (and accurately) identified with a willingness to take violent action.”

☞ *The Quiet Hours: City Photographs*, by Mike Melman (U Minnesota P, 2003), includes an introductory essay by Icelandic-American author Bill Holm, in which he writes, “These pictures ... have ancestors in both American art and literature.... Neither visual artists nor poets much noticed the industrial revolution or the growth of cities in the nineteenth century. Thoreau hears the train noise going by Walden Pond; it disturbs the solitude of his flute practice, and he doesn’t much like it.”

☞ Francesca Lyman’s essay “The Geography of Health,” published in *Land & People*, Fall 2002, examines “nature as an antidote to stress and disease,” and is off by a few years when she writes, “Only a century ago Henry David Thoreau wrote that humans need ‘the tonic of wildness.’ ”

☞ Jonathan Baird’s *Day Job: A Workplace Reader for the Restless Age* (Allen & Osborne, 1998) includes a sidebar five-sentence snippet from “Walking” that begins, “I am alarmed when it happens that I have walked a mile into the woods bodily, without getting there in spirit.” Oddly, there are two bibliographic entries, one for *Citizen Thoreau* (Ann Arbor: State Street Press, 1996), and one for “Walking” taken (curiously) from a 1938 anthology, *Essays English and American*, edited by Charles W. Eliot (New York: P.F. Collier and Son).

☞ *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, edited by Glen Stassen (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1998), includes an essay by John Cartwright and Susan Thistlethwaite, “Support Nonviolent Direct Action,” that cites Thoreau (“Civil Disobedience”), Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr., in successive insubstantial paragraphs.

☞ Bruce Wilshire’s *Fashionable Nihilism: A Critique of Analytic Philosophy* (State U New York P, 2002) contains several Thoreau references. In one instance, Thoreau, Emerson, Tolstoy, Kierkegaard, and others are mentioned as authors commonly thought by “informed citizens” to be philosophers, but not recognized as such by “the brightest philosophy departments” (rather “literary figures,” theologians, and so on).

☞ Caption of a photo of campers in Big Bend National Park in the April 2004 issue of *Outside* magazine: “And Thoreau said, Live deep instead of fast. So who’s arguing.” That quotation did not sound familiar to Chris Dodge, so he did a Google search that brought varied results with the following from Henry Seidel Canby appearing the likeliest source: “We live in the midst of details that keep us running around in circles and never getting

anywhere but tired, or that bring on nervous breakdowns and coronary thrombosis. The answer is not to take to the woods, but to find out what we really want to do and then cut out the details that fritter away what is most valuable in life. Live deep instead of fast. I think that is what Thoreau meant.”

☞ Donald Kuspit’s *The End of Art* (Cambridge UP, 2004) includes a chapter about Marcel Duchamp and Barnett Newman that cites Newman’s aesthetic as being “a primal existential phenomenon,” and quoting from Newman’s *Selected Writings and Interviews* a line about “the sound a loon makes ‘gliding lonesome over the lake,’ ” adding parenthetically, “Thoreau describes a similar loon in *Walden Pond*, suggesting Newman’s link to American Transcendentalism.” At least he didn’t refer to the book as *On Walden Pond*!

☞ A typical popular conception of Thoreau: “Thoreau still beckons, if I can take my laptop” (by Cynthia G. La Ferle, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 3 October 1997, search.csmonitor.com/durable/1997/10/03/opin/opin.2.html).

☞ Stephen Prothero in *American Jesus* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2003) opines that in 19th-century America, “the culture of personality was a response to the fear of the loss of the individual in ever-growing crowds. This fear, as old as Romanticism, was deeply felt by Henry David Thoreau, who elevated nonconformity, first, to a virtue and then to a necessity. By the first decade of the twentieth century, however, the fear that Thoreau had confronted in solitude at Walden Pond was endemic....”

☞ Trudy Dittmar’s *Fauna and Flora, Earth and Sky: Brushes with Nature’s Wisdom* (U Iowa P, 2004) includes this Thoreau quote on the page opposite the contents: “I am the wiser in respect to all knowledges, and the better qualified for all fortunes, for knowing that there is a minnow in the brook” (journal entry of 14 February 1840).

☞ Jonathan Rosen, “Why I Am for the Birds” (“Bookend,” *New York Times Book Review*, 1 June 1997, p. 55), which is about Peterson’s field guide, and birds and writers: “In his 1852 Journal, Henry David Thoreau complained that the naturalists and poets he admired had recorded their work ‘not on the bark of trees’ but in books he had to find in the libraries of cities like Cambridge or Boston, places ‘so strange and repulsive both to them and me’ that the trip seemed ‘too great a price to pay for access even to the works of Homer, or Chaucer or Linnaeus.’ Audubon’s great book ‘The Birds of America,’ printed in the aptly named Double Elephant Folio, stood over three feet high. Thoreau would have appreciated Peterson, a book that went into the field with you.”

☞ From the lead paragraph of an article by Lisa Sargent about declining wood thrush numbers, in the March 2004 issue of *AMC Outdoors Magazine* (Appalachian Mountain Club): “The wood thrush is ... the stuff of literature. Thoreau praised the wood thrush as a ‘Shakespeare among birds’ and called its flutelike melody ‘pure and ethereal.’ ”

☞ Paul Avrich’s *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton UP, 1984) quotes William Dean Howells (letter to William Salter, 14 November 1887): “William Lloyd Garrison ... Emerson ... Wendell Phillips, and Thoreau, and the other literary men whose sympathies influenced Brown to homicidal insurrection at Harper’s Ferry could have been put to death with the same justice that consigned the Anarchists to the gallows in Chicago.”

☞ In late-January 2004 we contacted Kevin Dann, a writer living in Woodstock, Vermont, who teaches part-time at the

Emerson Waldorf High School. We had learned from a Web search that Dann was writing a biography of Thoreau and were curious what he was about. In response to our query about how his biography might be situated in relation to Harding's and Richardson's biographies, as well as others, Dann wrote:

I read Robert Richardson's *Life of the Mind* when it came out in 1986, and was stunned and inspired by both his lyrical writing and his penetration of Thoreau's intellectual journey. I remember that at the time I had just come upon a little treasure trove of correspondence from the 1880s and 1890s between Manly Hardy of Maine (Fanny Eckstorm's father) and Rowland Robinson of Vermont (I wrote about Robinson in my most recent book, *Lewis Creek Lost & Found*). There was a good deal of criticism by Hardy of Thoreau's understanding of the Maine woods, and along with my gushing letter of admiration to [Richardson], I posed some queries about these observations of Hardy's.

I can surely see how the stuff I sent would leave you puzzled about how I will 'situate' myself between Harding, Richardson, and others. I guess I'd say that my biography will have a bit more of a cultural historical context than these and other biographies, but that the crucial difference would be in my aim[, which] is to introduce some rather heterodox ideas about the nature of Time and Space, and the role of once acknowledged but now rejected beings and forces in the dance of destiny, both personal and collective.

I expect I will stay off the radar screens of the Thoreauvian scholarly community even after the book comes out, if prior publishing experience is any guide. I wrote another heretical book a few years ago (*Across the Great Border Fault: The Naturalist Myth in America*) which was directed at the academic history of science and environmental history communities, and it barely registered a blip. But this only makes me feel as if I'm in good company with Henry, and heck, I haven't had to keep 700 copies of one of my books stored in the attic ... yet!"

☞ Mary Pipher twice quotes Thoreau in *The Shelter of Each Other: Rebuilding Our Families* (Ballantine Books, 1996), neither time providing a source. Saying that her bias is for family ceremonies held outdoors, she adds, "As Thoreau said, 'In the wilderness there is life.'" Pipher advocates for parents to visit wild places with their children, prefacing this with these words: "Thoreau said, 'This curious world which we inhabit is more wonderful than it is convenient, more beautiful than it is useful; it is more to be admired and enjoyed than used.'" "

☞ Christopher Phillips's *Six Questions of Socrates: A Modern-Day Journey of Discovery Through World Philosophy* (W. W. Norton, 2004) contains two paragraphs on Thoreau and Native Americans, quoting extensively from Thoreau's journals and Richard F. Fleck's *Henry Thoreau and John Muir Among the Indians* (pp. 33–34). "Few recognized and appreciated Native Americans' applied naturalism as did the philosopher and naturalist Henry David Thoreau, who more than anyone influenced John Muir." Phillips also quotes someone who says, "I've been thinking of what Henry David Thoreau said, 'The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.'" Although the first half of this last quotation is

clearly Thoreau, the last half is someone else's. Curiously, though, this botched quotation is used 185 times online (according to Google.com).

☞ T. D. Allman's *Rogue State: America at War with the World* (Nation Books, 2004) devotes several pages to examining the imperial policies of President James Knox Polk (pp. 353–356). Allman writes, "Then, as later, the moral outrage—the sense that an American president had betrayed America's values, indeed corrupted the meaning of America itself by tricking the nation into an unjust war—was especially strong on campus and, eventually, in Congress. 'When a whole country is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army,' protested a Harvard student named Henry David Thoreau, 'I think it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize. What makes this duty the more urgent is the fact that the country so overrun is not our own, but ours is an invading army.'" Polk took office in 1845, long after Thoreau left Harvard, a fact Allman obscures by saying that outrage was "especially strong on campus" and then quoting "Harvard student" Thoreau.

2005 Annual Gathering

Thoreau: Nature, Science, and Higher Laws

7–10 July 2005

Concord, Massachusetts

Please send ideas and suggestions for speakers, programs, and activities for the Annual Gathering before Friday, 10 December 2004, to:

The Thoreau Society
Annual Gathering Committee
55 Old Bedford Road
Concord, MA 01742 U.S.A.

or
info@thoreausociety.org

Additions to the Thoreau Bibliography

Robert N. Hudspeth

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Announcements

MEMBER-LED ACTIVITIES

Check www.thoreausociety.org for up-to-date information on member-led activities throughout the summer and fall. Notices of such activities can be sent to our Outreach Coordinator: steven.bentley@thoreausociety.org.

PLEASE NOTE

Beginning with *Thoreau Society Bulletin* 250 (Winter 2005) each "Announcements" and "Calendar of Events" listing will contain the usual headline but only a one-sentence description. More detailed, comprehensive, and timely descriptions of announcements and events are now and will continue to be available at www.thoreausociety.org

Calendar of Events

SEPTEMBER 30–NOVEMBER 18

6:30 P.M.

WALDEN AT 150

Tom Potter will lead six sessions on *Walden* at Franklin College in Franklin, Indiana, commencing on 30 September and each Thursday until 18 November except 21 and 28 October. Registration required. Call (317) 738-8094 for more information.

OCTOBER 1-2

RE-AWAKENING EAST-WEST CONNECTIONS: WALDEN AND BEYOND
The Boston Research Center for the 21st Century will host the first annual Ikeda Forum for Intercultural Dialogue at 396 Harvard Street, Cambridge, Mass. Presenters will include Phyllis Cole and Bradley P. Dean. For further information, contact the Boston Research Center at (617) 491-1090.

OCTOBER 4, 25, 28

7 P.M.

WALDEN AT 150

Tom Potter will deliver a lecture on *Walden* at the following three branches of the Indianapolis/Marion County Libraries (Indiana): Wayne Branch Library (October 4), Southport Branch Library (October 25), Glendale Branch Library (October 28). Free and open to the public.

OCTOBER 6-27

7 P.M.

WALDEN AT 150

Tom Potter will lead four consecutive Wednesday-night sessions on *Walden* at Holliday Park in Indianapolis, Indiana, beginning October 6 and ending October 27. Registration required. Call (317) 327-7180 for more information

OCTOBER 16

1 P.M.

THOREAU'S VISITS TO MONADNOCK AND THE PETERBORO HILLS

Bradley P. Dean will address the Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Wapack Trail, following a morning hike along part of the Trail, at Shieling Forest headquarters, Old Street Road, Peterborough, N.H. Free and open to the public. For further information, contact info@wapack.org.

OCTOBER 21

6 P.M.

WALDEN AT 150

Tom Potter will deliver a lecture on *Walden* at the Fountain Square Branch Library in Indianapolis, Indiana. Free and open to the public.

NOVEMBER 1-DECEMBER 6

6 P.M.

WALDEN AT 150

Tom Potter will lead six consecutive Monday-night sessions on Thoreau's *Essays* (Lewis Hyde's edition) at Franklin College in Franklin, Indiana, commencing on November 1 and ending on December 6. Registration required. Call (317) 738-8094 for more information.

NOVEMBER 20**CELEBRATION OF WALDEN SESQUICENTENNIAL**

Uppsala University in Sweden will host a full-day symposium in honor of the *Walden* sesquicentennial. Speakers will include Ronald Bosco, Henrik Otterberg, Steven Hartman, David Doren, Daniel Ogden. Visit the English Department Website at www.engelska.uu.se for further details.

DECEMBER 27-30**MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION**

Each December the Thoreau Society sponsors two sessions at the Modern Language Association convention. Both Society sessions this year will address the topic "The Emerson's Parlor and Mrs. Thoreau's Dinner Table: Transcendental Conversations." The first session, chaired by Sandy Petruionis of Penn State Altoona, will

feature Peter Gibian of McGill University on "The Parlor and Its Discontents: Transcendentalist Talk Circles and a Thoreau-Whitman Debate about Spoken Dialogue"; Sarah Wider of Colgate University on "Henry's Last Paradox: Thoreau at Home with the Emersons"; and Bradley P. Dean of West Peterborough, N.H., on "Emerson, Thoreau, and the Reverend Daniel Foster." The second session, chaired by Phyllis Cole of Pennsylvania State, Delaware County, will feature Lance Newman of California State University, San Marcos, on "Orestes Brownson's *New Views*"; Robert A. Gross of the University of Connecticut on "Faith in the Boardinghouse: New Views of Thoreau Family Religion"; Bruce Ronda of Colorado State University on "Myths of Memory: Elizabeth Peabody Visits, and Recollects, the Emersons"; and Price McMurray of Texas Wesleyan University on "'An Egyptian Skull at Our Banquet': Hawthorne, Emerson, and the Idealist Convivium."

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Established in 1941, the **Thoreau Society, Inc.**, is an international nonprofit organization with a mission to honor Henry David Thoreau by stimulating interest in and fostering education about his life, works, and philosophy and his place in his world and ours; by coordinating research on his life and writings; by acting as a repository for Thoreauviana and material relevant to Henry David Thoreau; and by advocating for the preservation of Thoreau Country. Membership in the Society includes subscriptions to its two publications, the *Thoreau Society Bulletin* (published quarterly) and *The Concord Saunterer* (published annually). Society members receive a ten-percent discount on all merchandise purchased from the Thoreau Society Shop at Walden Pond and advance notice about Society programs, including the Annual Gathering.

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Merchandise: (including books and mail-order items): Thoreau Society Shop at Walden Pond, 915 Walden Street, Concord, MA 01742-4511, U.S.A.; tel: (978) 287-5477; fax: (978) 287-5620; e-mail: info@shopatwaldenpond.org; Website: www.shopatwaldenpond.org.

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